



# INTERNATIONAL RAFTING FEDERATION PARA RAFTING SAFETY GUIDELINES

From March 2021

## Definitions

- **Rescue Priority** = the priority paddlers must be given in a rescue situation and used as indicators as to the self-rescue abilities of a team.
- **Classification Card** = once a Classification has been fully completed a “Classification Card” with the Athlete’s details will state the Athlete’s:
  - Points
  - Stability status
  - Adaptive Equipment Registered - including photos
  - Rescue Priority

## 1. Introduction

1. Safety is paramount, and Para Rafting races will create hazards and risks not normally present with unimpaired racing.
2. This document, together with the IRF Race Rules - Safety Addendum, is an aid for Para Rafting event organizers and also lays out the IRF minimum requirements for safety at Para Rafting A and B level events.

## 2. Safety Authority

1. **Safety Committee**
  - a. The IRF Para Rafting Safety Committee is appointed by the IRF to oversee all the management of Para Rafting safety rules and regulations.
  - b. This committee will appoint the Safety Director for the Event and will also assess the Safety & Rescue Plan and Risk Assessment for the event together with the Safety Director.
2. **Safety Director**
  - a. This position is defined in “K. Officials and Duties” in the IRF Race Rules, and their further duties are defined in the Safety Addendum and below.

## 3. Athlete Event Registration

1. Teams are to follow the process set out by the Event Organisers for registration.
2. Besides the standard information requested in registration, Athletes must provide a copy of their Para Rafting Classification Card.
3. All team members’ registration details, including Classification Card copies, will be forwarded to the IRF Para Rafting Safety Committee by the date specified by the IRF Para Rafting Safety Committee.
4. The Classification Cards state the athletes’ Rescue Priority in a rescue situation as follows:
  - a. Rescuer
  - b. Low priority

- c. High priority
  - d. Extreme priority
5. If teams have a reserve with them they must also let Organisers know at the start of the event which paddlers in their team will be paddling in which disciplines. If this changes at any time after this point it is the duty of the Team to ensure this is recorded with the Safety Director or appointed Official. Failure to do so can result in penalties to the team.
  6. By the start of the event each team will be presented with the IRF Para Rafting Team Safety Form which is to have the key information that the Safety Team needs for each paddler in the team. It is the duty of each team to confirm that all the details on this form is correct. Failure to point out any incorrect or lacking details can result in penalties to the team.

## 4. Team Raft Safety

### 1. Raft Safety prior to getting on the river

- a. All teams must pass visual safety inspection from an Event Safety Official before racing. If deemed unsafe Official must document and refer Team to Safety Director prior to any registered team being on the river.
- b. If an Athlete or team believes that any other team is unsafe, the team representative must inform an Event Official immediately.

### 2. Self-Rescue Abilities

- a. All athletes must have their Rescue Priority documented on their Athlete Classification Cards (part of Athlete Classification - see Classification Procedure).
- b. The Rescue Priority defines the athlete's ability to perform the following tasks:
  - i. Re-right a flipped raft quickly and unaided.
  - ii. Climb onto/into a raft unaided.
  - iii. Perform aggressive swimming techniques in white water.
  - iv. Perform passive swimming techniques in white water. Whitewater float position with movement to avoid hazards
  - v. Aggressive rescue of a throw bag. i.e. aggressive swim to rope
  - vi. Passive rescue of a throw bag.
- c. If the current Rescue Priority is not stated or correct on the Athlete's Classification Card due to a recent change in the athlete's ability to perform the above tasks due to loss of function, injury, fitness, strength or other, the athlete must be referred to the Safety Director at the start of the event so that this can be remedied before the athlete gets on the river.
- d. In all Para Rafting Events the Safety Director may enforce Minimum Safety Standards as follows:
  - i. Minimum two Rescuer Athlete's per team (i.e. able to perform all above rescue actions).
  - ii. Maximum of two High Priority Athletes per raft.
  - iii. Maximum one Extreme Priority Athlete and one High Priority Athlete per raft.
- e. If any team falls outside of the Minimum Safety Standards stated above the Safety Director may enforce a qualified Safety person/s is present in the raft at all times.

### 3. High and Extreme Rescue Priority Athletes

- a. **Athlete Priority Definition:**

- i. **High priority athletes** - as stated on Athlete Classification Card a High Priority Athlete is any athlete that:
  1. Cannot Aggressive swim in river environment
  2. Cannot see or retrieve a throw-bag in river rescue
  3. Any Athlete the IRF Classifier, Para Rafting Safety Committee or Safety Director deems so.
- ii. **Extreme Priority Athletes** - as stated on Athlete Classification Card an Extreme Priority Athlete is any athlete that:
  1. Cannot perform Aggressive swim in flat water environment.
  2. Relies upon a full releasable support seat.
  3. Unable to retrieve a throw-bag in rescue.
  4. Any Athlete the IRF Classifier, Para Rafting Safety Committee or IRF Para Rafting Event Safety Official deems so.

**b. Extra precautions needed**

- i. It is mandatory that Extreme Priority Athletes wear bright Red coloured helmets with a visual White cross in the form of white waterproof tape added to their Red helmet.
- ii. If the Safety Director deems it necessary all High Priority Athlete's must wear bright Red coloured helmets.
- iii. The responsibility of Extreme Priority Athletes (Red and White taped helmets) are that of the Athlete and their team. Not complying with these safety requirements will be instant disqualification. And team will be Red Flagged for future events.
- iv. High and Extreme priority athletes may provide their own bright red helmet and white tape. The helmet must pass IRF Race Rule "J. Event Safety". Otherwise red helmets will be supplied by Event Organiser.
- v. Any Athlete that the IRF Classifier and/or Safety Director deems must be High or Extreme Priority must be documented immediately and have their classification card updated at the earliest possible time, until they can prove otherwise.
- vi. All Event Safety Officials must be aware of Extreme priority and High priority athletes for rescue purposes and understand helmet colours.

**4. During Event**

- a. Well before the start of each discipline the Safety Director or specifically appointed Official, must ensure all Safety Officials are informed as to which 6 paddlers, together with their Rescue Priorities, will be racing in this specific discipline.
- b. Consideration may need to be given, in exceptional circumstances, where fully unimpaired and experienced Athletes are required to be part of a Para Rafting team. In such circumstances, the organisers are to ensure that each participating team is treated equally.

## 5. Adaptive equipment

1. All Adaptive Equipment, including Prosthetics:

- a. Must be registered prior to any Para Rafting Event. The equipment is documented with photo on the individual Athlete's Classification Card.
- b. The registered equipment, as tested and passed safety standards and performance requirements during the individual Athlete's classification, is the only equipment allowed in all Para Rafting Events.
- c. All equipment must pass visual safety inspection by the IRF Classifier, or Safety Director, or specifically appointed Safety Official, prior to Athlete using equipment on river.

- d. If an Athlete or team believes that any athlete's equipment is inappropriate or unsafe, the team representative must inform an Event Judge or Safety Official immediately.
  - e. In exceptional circumstances due to loss, damage or otherwise, consideration may allow the Athlete to use alternative equipment in the Para Rafting Event. All non-registered equipment must be deemed safe by IRF Classifier and Safety Director prior to Athlete using equipment on river. Equipment must be documented and photographed immediately and added to Athlete's classification card at the earliest possible time.
2. If any misinformation or equipment safety protocols mentioned in this document are breached, this will be referred to the Safety Director if during the event, otherwise to the IRF's Para Rafting Committee, and teams may be disqualified and Athletes may face suspension.